

Three Star Books

Lawrence Weiner
SUOMI FINLAND PASSI PORT PASSPORT
Published Summer 2011

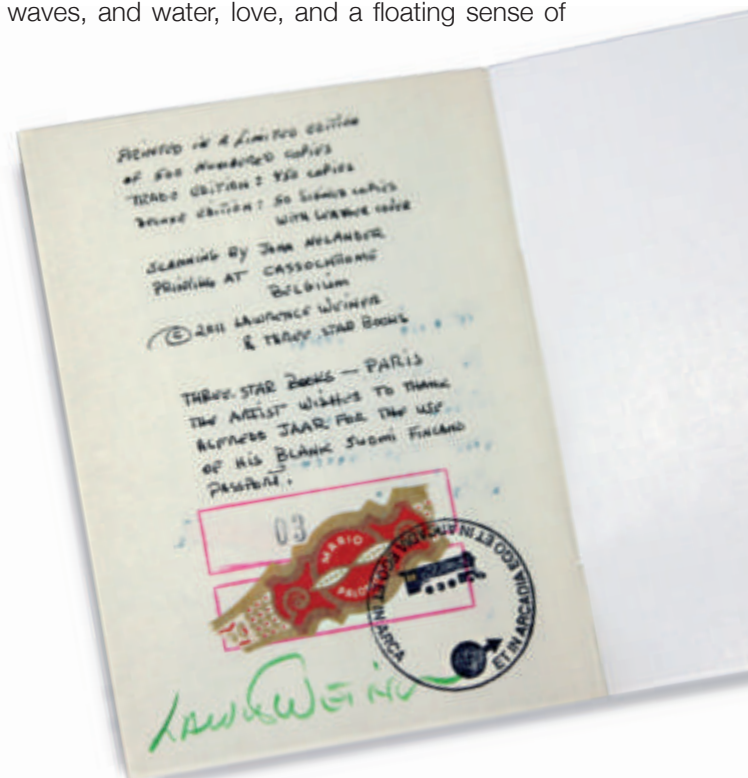
Offset
10 x 13,5 cm.
36 pages including cover
Full color
Printed in a limited edition of 500 numbered copies
Trade edition: 450 copies
Deluxe edition: 50 numbered, signed, hand-illustrated, and stamped copies with leather cover

The passport as design and art object is a beloved prop in the annals of contemporary art. In the case of Lawrence Weiner's identi-kit for Three Star Books, we have a particularly poignant version. Composed of texts and abstract visual elements, SUOMI FINLAND PASSI PORT PASSPORT is a self-portrait of Weiner's logic in the form of an artwork. Verbal and visual cues swim in equilibrium, with text and image becoming one and the same. This elementary conflation is evidenced in almost child-like renderings in mostly primary colors executed in marker pens. But the topic, the relation of word and image, is the great stuff of aesthetic speculation since the time of the Greeks. Or in Latin, of ut pictura poesis: the relation of poetry to picture. In a meandering dialogue about salt water, mermaids and mermen, moons and suns, and love that might or might not emerge from the mist, Weiner writes words and pictures in very contemporary, and almost personal terms.

The outset of the project is a trip to Jamaica, as evidenced by collage elements that ironize the origins of Conceptual Art. It ends with the label from one of Weiner's cigars. Will love emerge from the waves? Something "sticking out," bottles, and other portents of desire, weave together in clauses, bars and abstract forms harking back to the language of Cobra.

What does it mean? Often, Weiner's poetry is disarmingly simple. In this example, the cover of his work for Three Star Books might be a clue. It is a leather passport cover. Riffing on an installation by artist Alfredo Jaar, One Million Finnish Passports, in which a million blank passports were piled up to speak about illegal immigration and displacement, Weiner used the device of his friend and colleague (in the time-honored friendly theft that is the nature of artistic inspiration), to turn one such passport into a booklet of musings and a metaphoric passport of his own.

This then, is the identity of the artist, his carte de visite, his certificate of existence. Weiner's work, his musings, his hopes and desires, rolled into a plaintive song about waves, and water, love, and a floating sense of longing.



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